
The Effect of Celebrity Endorsement on Brand Reputation: A Case Study

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Abstract:

Purpose: This study aims at investigating the impact of the credibility of the approving celebrity on the reputation of the brand and also investigates the role of the moderator of the negative publicity among customers.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This study is applicable based on objective and descriptive-survey based methodology.

Findings: Data analysis reveals that the credibility of the approving celebrity has a positive and significant effect on the reputation of the brand. Besides, findings obtained from the subordinate assumptions show that attractiveness, expertise and being commensurate with product have a positive and significant impact on brand reputation whereas trustworthiness does not affect brand reputation significantly. Moreover, findings obtained from the moderator assumption reveals that the negative publicity plays the role of the moderator in the causal relationship between the credibility of the approving celebrity and brand reputation.

Practical Implications: Generally, a celebrity endorsement leads to a favorable attitude towards the brand and ultimately leads to the intention to buy the products.

Originality/Value: In summary it can be stated that the celebrity's characteristics must match that of the advertised product. Of course, there should be more caution here, because the more famous a person is, the more dangerous his or her fall can be and it can have huge consequences for the company.

Keywords: Advertising, negative publicity, trustworthiness, SunStar juice.

JEL codes: M31, M37.

Paper Type: Research study.

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1. Introduction

Employment of famous personalities, who have been under the close attention of the public, is one of the attractive tools in advertisement (Karasiewicz and Kowalczyk, 2014). In this strategy, famous people try to relate their photo, credibility, reputation and popularity to a brand in order to approve their products and services and increase the awareness and purchase intention of a product substantially (Awasthi and Chharia, 2015; Mukherjee, 2009). These celebrities are thoroughly analysed with regard to the personal and social aspects prior to their selection and based on the advertising objectives about the target product (Mukherjee, 2009; Khatri, 2006). In fact, selecting a celebrity in a random manner will not secure the success of a commercial advertisement at all (Thwaites *et al.*, 2012).

As much as a proper selection may produce a positive image of a brand in the audience's mind, an inappropriate selection may create serious hazards for the product (White *et al.*, 2009; Ofori-Okyere and Asamoah, 2015). Results of this advertising style are undoubtedly of prominent importance for commercial companies since marketing managers devote huge sums of money to this kind of advertisement annually so that they can both increase their sale and obtain a substantial share in the competitive market, hence the necessity to make a proper and calculated choice of celebrities in advertisements (Thwaites *et al.*, 2012; Qureshi and Malik, 2017). Provided that the advertisement process is performed correctly, it can lead to improvement of brand reputation through the support or approval made by celebrities (Sharma, 2016; Brown and Tiggemann, 2016). This research uses a case study in order to analyse the effect of using celebrities on brand reputation and investigate the role of moderator of the negative environment which surrounds such personalities.

2. Literature Review

Using famous people to support a brand is a commercial technique that seeks to establish a meaningful relationship between the product and the champions and this increase the motivation for consumption of the advertised product significantly (Thwaites *et al.*, 2012). The utilization of prominent people in commercial advertising began seriously in the late nineteenth century (Erdogan, 1999) and is considered as one of the most popular and attractive advertising strategies today (Biswas *et al.*, 2009). According to reports from previous studies, on average between one-fourth to one-fifth of all advertisements worldwide utilise this style of advertising, which is considerable (Erdogan *et al.*, 2001, Wang *et al.*, 2017; Knoll and Matthes, 2017). In fact, evidence indicate that involving celebrities in advertising continues to increase dramatically, and organizations are keen to continue doing so for many reasons (Thwaites *et al.*, 2012; Pringle and Binet, 2005). It is worth noting that a celebrity's advertising presence is a costly way because prominent personalities are aware of their profit-generating values and usually have a full understanding of the fact that they are at the center of public attention, and naturally seek significant material interest in exchange for their commercial support. They know well that endorsing a brand can

easily persuade their fans and even ordinary people to buy a product (Wei and Lu, 2013). Nike, for example, invested \$ 90 million in Mr. Tiger Woods in a certain time period to increase its international market share (Erdogan and Drollinger, 2008). So far, few studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of celebrities' endorsement on brand names, and there are different views on the success or failure of this advertising form.

However, most experts believe that the sensitivity of this method is very high because it may not produce the desired results and can have detrimental effects. According to reports, only about a quarter of the advertisements performed by celebrities have achieved the predicted and planned results (Thwaites *et al.*, 2012; Freire *et al.*, 2018). There have even been cases that business firms have been harmed a lot by the dissemination of celebrity misconduct, such as violation of social law, and ethical and sexual arguments, which even led to the unilateral termination of large contracts (Um, 2013). On the other hand, some believe that celebrity attributes can draw social attention to a brand (Thwaites *et al.*, 2012) because they can be an effective role model for inspiring the endless demands and dreams of the audience (Rockwell and Giles, 2009). This can lead to return on capital (Thwaites *et al.*, 2012), increase sales (Elberse and Verleun, 2012) and develop the value of the company's stock and ultimately promote brand value and position (Spry *et al.*, 2011).

For example, the advertising that Spice Girls group have carried out for Pepsi Company led to a positive and remarkable outcome that resulted in a 2% increase in the company's stock (Wang *et al.*, 2017). This predominant profitability comes from the careful selection of a suitable celebrity. In fact, a celebrity must be trustworthy so that people support his or her suggestions (Wang *et al.*, 2017; Atkin and Block, 1983). There should also be a considerable relationship between the celebrity's expertise and activities with the product being advertised (Aljasir, 2019; Amos *et al.*, 2008; McCracken, 1989), and, finally it should be attractive enough to draw public attention so that there will be the maximized effectiveness of the advertising process and also the minimized risk (Ohanian, 1990; Wang *et al.*, 2017; Kahle and Homer, 1985). Marketing executives here need to review the implementation process thoroughly so that they can make the necessary corrections if a negative social viewpoint emerges.

3. Introduction of a Case Study (SunStar Brand)

Zarrin Jam Marina (ZJM) Company was established in 2008 with more than 100,000 square meter factory area located in Kaveh Industrial City in Iran. The first products were marketed in 2012 under the name of Sunstar. ZJM Company has integrated the newest technology in its production line. Sunstar juice is considered as one of the highest quality and most prominent juice brands available in the Iranian market. ZJM Company, the owner of Sunstar brand, launched dedicated commercials in mid-2016 in collaboration with two brothers, Xanyar and Sirvan Khosravi (Iranian pop singers). The purpose of the advertising was to combine the music attractions with the beverage industry to make the SunStar brand products particularly seen by public and ultimately

lead to the purchase of goods and also make branding possible. In this regard, it has been attempted to achieve substantial financial and non-financial value for the company using these two celebrities in concerts, clips and billboards in various campaigns.

According to company's reports, the sales and profitability of Sunstar brand products have increased significantly after advertising with the mentioned celebrities. Therefore, the present study focuses on the advertising of this brand (sunstarjuice website, 2020).

4. Research Hypotheses

Based on the previous discussions regarding the features of approving celebrities including attractiveness, expertise, being commensurate with product and trustworthiness as well as the moderating role of the negative publicity (Ohanian, 1990; Awasthi and Choraria, 2015; Aljasir, 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2017; Kahle and Homer, 1985; Amos *et al.*, 2008; McCracken, 1989; Sharma, 2016, Osei-Frimpong *et al.*, 2019), the following hypotheses including two main hypotheses and eight subordinate hypotheses have been made as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Credibility of celebrities affects the brand reputation.

1-1: the attractiveness of the celebrity affects the brand reputation.

1-2: the expertise of the celebrity affects the brand reputation.

1-3: celebrity's being commensurate with product affects the brand reputation.

1-4: the trustworthiness of the celebrity affects the brand reputation.

Hypothesis 2: The negative publicity of the celebrity has a moderating effect on the brand reputation.

2-1: the negative publicity towards the attractiveness of a celebrity has a moderating effect on the brand reputation.

2-2: the negative publicity towards the expertise of the celebrity has a moderating effect on the brand reputation.

2-3: the negative publicity towards the celebrity's being commensurate with product has a moderating effect on the brand reputation.

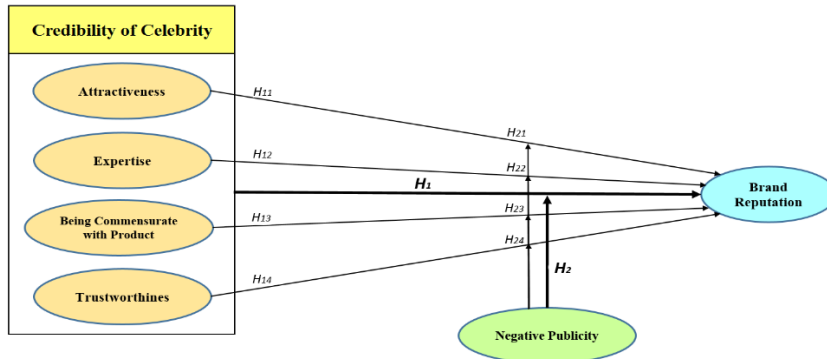
2-4: the negative publicity towards the trustworthiness of the celebrity has a moderating effect on the brand reputation.

5. Research Methodology

Based on the research hypotheses and previous related studies, the research model was designed as follows in Figure 1. This research is a practical study and considered both qualitative and correlative based on its nature and content, respectively. Therefore, regarding its objective, the research is considered a practical, correlated, descriptive survey which is conducted through a case study. First, the theoretical literature and

research background have been gathered and scrutinized, and later, a conceptual model was designed.

Figure 1. Research Conceptual Framework



Source: Own study.

6. Data Collection Method

The statistical society of the following research includes the customers of SunStar brand in Tehran from among whom 390 subjects were selected through Cochran Formula. In the first step, a questionnaire was distributed among the experts and academicians to identify 9 factors which influence negative publicity and their reliability and validity were approved. Then, using a field study, the already localization of identified factors and other related research including Ohanian (1990), Aljasir, (2019), Awasthi and Choraria, (2015), Amos *et al.* (2008), Erdem and Swait (2004), Brown and Tiggemann, (2016), Osei-Frimpong *et al.* (2019), and Sharma, (2016), another questionnaire with 29 questions and 7 variables (Table 1) was designed and distributed among the customers through both electronic and personal delivery.

Table 1. Questionnaire Description

Concept	Aspect	Source	Questions
credibility of celebrity	attractiveness	Ohanian, (1990), Aljasir, (2019), Awasthi and Choraria (2015), Amos <i>et al.</i> , (2008)	1-4
	expertise		5-8
	trustworthiness		9-12
	being commensurate with product	Osei-Frimpong <i>et al.</i> , (2019)	13-15
brand reputation	—	Erdem & Swait, (2004), Sharma (2016), Brown and Tiggemann, (2016)	16-20
negative publicity	actions against social values	researchers	21-23
	violation of rules		24-26
	personal life		27-29

Source: Own study.

7. Data Analysis

Table 2 contains the main demographic features of the respondents.

Table 2. *Sample key demographic features*

Sample Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	166	42.6
	Male	224	57.4
Age range	Under 20 years	124	31.8
	21 – 30 years	83	21.3
	31 – 40 years	127	32.6
	41 – 50 years	50	12.8
	More than 51	6	1.5
Academic Level	Diploma	112	28.7
	Undergraduate and Graduate	255	65.4
	PhD.	23	5.9

Source: Own study.

Before asking the specialised questions and in order to make an assessment of the familiarity of respondents with the product, the respondents were asked to answer the following two questions (Table 3).

Table 3. *Additional questions about the case study*

Question	Answer options	Frequency	Percentage
Have you ever seen this piece of advertisement?	Yes	299	76.7
	No	91	23.3
Has this piece of advertisement persuaded you to purchase a product of this brand?	No answer	88	22.6
	Yes	127	32.6
	No	175	44.9

Source: Own study.

7.1 Inferential Statistics

In this section, the measurement model has been tested in order to calculate the convergent and discriminant validity of the variables. Firstly, Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was used to assess the normality of research variables and since the significance level of variables was lower than 5%, the variables are not considered as normal and smart PLS software was employed for data analysis.

The convergent validity illustrates the amounts of one or some variables in different approaches to measure the correlation of constructs (Carlson and Herdman, 2012). In this regard, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the Composite Reliability (CR) should be at least 0.5 and 0.7 respectively (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Based on the obtained results (Table 4), the convergent validity of the measurement model was accepted.

Table 4. Convergent validity assessment

Constructs	Questions	Factor Loadings	AVE (Average Variance Extracted)	CR (Composite Reliability)	Cronbach's Alpha
credibility of the celebrity	Q 1-15	—	0.769	0.930	0.947
attractiveness	Q 1	0.858	0.664	0.886	0.827
	Q 2	0.619			
	Q 3	0.881			
	Q 4	0.874			
expertise	Q 5	0.789	0.773	0.931	0.900
	Q 6	0.877			
	Q 7	0.937			
	Q 8	0.908			
trustworthiness	Q 9	0.942	0.888	0.969	0.958
	Q 10	0.946			
	Q 11	0.942			
	Q 12	0.940			
being commensurate with product	Q 13	0.715	0.717	0.882	0.803
	Q 14	0.917			
	Q 15	0.895			
brand reputation	Q 16	0.813	0.709	0.924	0.898
	Q 17	0.854			
	Q 18	0.875			
	Q 19	0.856			
	Q 20	0.813			
negative publicity	Q 21-29	—	0.652	0.846	0.828
personal life	Q 21	0.794	0.709	0.879	0.794
	Q 22	0.836			
	Q 23	0.754			
violation of rules	Q 24	0.850	0.632	0.837	0.708
	Q 25	0.863			
	Q 26	0.813			
actions against social values	Q 27	0.848	0.618	0.828	0.685
	Q 28	0.814			
	Q 29	0.689			

Source: Own study.

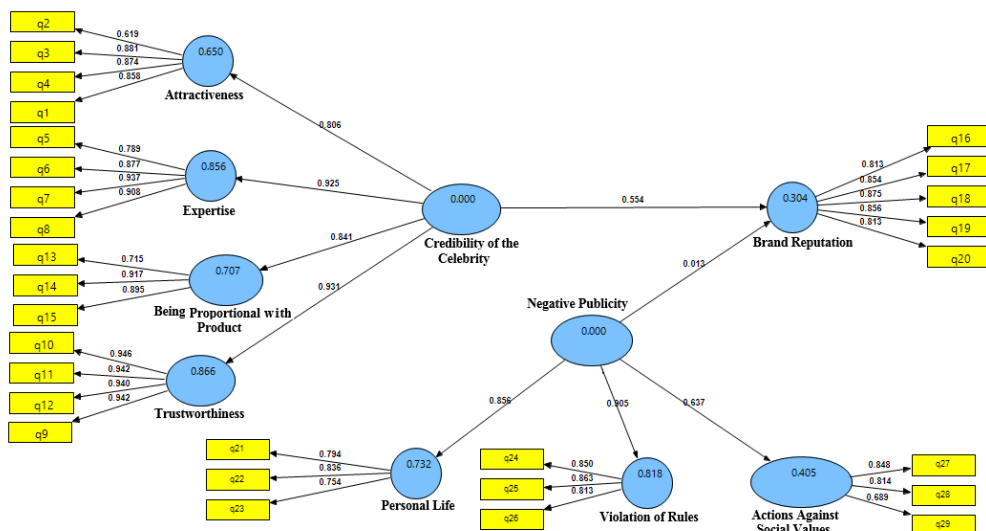
For analysis of discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker criterion is used. According to this criterion, the square root of AVE amount for each construct should be higher than bilateral correlations between that construct and all other constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The measurement model results displayed that the Fornell-Larcker criterion was satisfied for all the constructs of the model (Figure 2) and discriminant validity was accepted (Table 5).

Table 5. Discriminant validity assessment (Fornell-Larcker criterion)

Constructs	attractive ness	expertis e	trustwort hiness	being commensurate with product	brand reputatio n	negative publicity
attractiveness	0.8152	—	—	—	—	—
expertise	0.6850	0.8792	—	—	—	—
trustworthiness	0.6181	0.8303	0.9424	—	—	—
being commensurate with product	0.5949	0.6849	0.7506	0.8469	—	—
brand reputation	0.4630	0.5071	0.4644	0.5297	0.8424	—
negative publicity	-0.1471	-0.2461	-0.1962	-0.1662	-0.1085	0.8077

Source: Own study.

Figure 2. Measurement Model Analysis



Source: Own study.

7.2 Testing the Structural Model

Finally for testing the structural model, the coefficient of determination (R^2) has been computed (from 0 to 1) in Table 6 and by using a non-parametric test called Stone-Geisser which evaluates the predictability of the research model, CV.redundancy (Q^2) and CV.communality (H^2) measures have been calculated.

Table 6. *Coefficient of Determination of the research model*

Constructs	R ² (Coefficient of Determination)	CV. Redundancy (Q ²)	CV. Communality (H ²)
credibility of celebrity	—	—	0.5957
attractiveness	—	0.4216	0.6645
expertise	—	0.6576	0.7731
trustworthiness	—	0.7645	0.8883
being commensurate with product	—	0.4944	0.7173
brand reputation	0.3043	0.2069	0.7097
negative publicity	—	—	0.4302
personal life	—	0.5771	0.7094
violation of rules	—	0.4573	0.6324
actions against social values	—	0.2457	0.6186

Source: Own study.

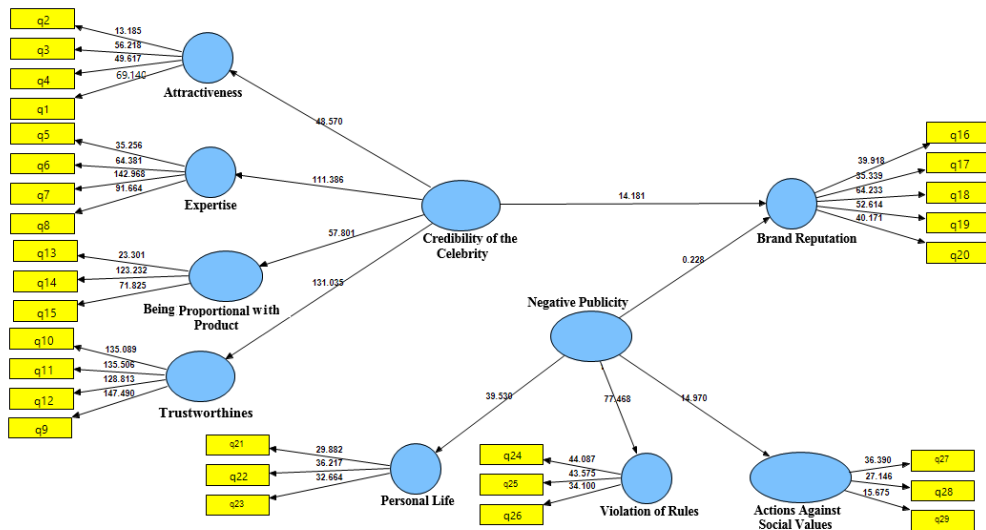
The structural model is tested by path coefficients and t-value (Figure 3). The acceptable range for t-value is higher than 1.96 or lower than -1.96. The results of the hypotheses test analysis are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. *Hypotheses test results*

hypothesis	construct			path coefficient (β)	t-value	results
	independent variable	dependent variable	mediator variable			
1	credibility of celebrity	brand reputation	—	0.551	14.133	Accepted
1-1	attractiveness	brand reputation	—	0.154	2.430	Accepted
1-2	expertise	brand reputation	—	0.243	3.295	Accepted
1-3	being commensurate with product	brand reputation	—	0.343	5.643	Accepted
1-4	trustworthiness	brand reputation	—	-0.083	1.144	Not Accepted
2	credibility of celebrity	brand reputation	negative publicity	—	2.806	Accepted
2-1	attractiveness	brand reputation	negative publicity	—	1.070	Not Accepted
2-2	expertise	brand reputation	negative publicity	—	2.890	Accepted
2-3	being commensurate with product	brand reputation	negative publicity	—	0.736	Not Accepted
2-4	trustworthiness	brand reputation	negative publicity	—	2.972	Accepted

Source: Own study.

Figure 3. Structural Model Analysis with t-values



Source: Own study.

8. Results

According to Table 7, as it can be seen, based on the main hypothesis 1, there is a significant relationship between credibility of celebrity and brand reputation. Moreover, findings obtained from the main hypothesis 2, reveal that the negative publicity plays the role of the moderator in the causal relationship between the credibility of the approving celebrity and brand reputation.

Besides, findings obtained from the subordinate hypotheses 1-1, 1-2 and 1-3, show that attractiveness, expertise and being commensurate with product have a positive and significant impact on brand reputation whereas based on the subordinate hypothesis 1-4, trustworthiness does not affect brand reputation significantly.

At the same time, findings obtained from the subordinate hypotheses 2-2 and 2-4, demonstrate that negative publicity plays the role of the moderator in the relationship between the expertise and trustworthiness with brand reputation while according to hypotheses 2-1 and 2-3 it does not have the role of the moderator in the relationship between the being commensurate with product and attractiveness with brand reputation.

9. Discussion and Conclusion

Advertising the Sunstar beverage brand using pop singers in Iran is recognized as an effective advertising and, according to the findings, audiences find it as a sound and effective strategy. Generally speaking, a celebrity endorsement leads to a favorable

attitude towards the brand and ultimately leads to the intention to buy the products. Of course, the celebrity must be carefully selected to avoid negative effects. In fact, a celebrity needs to have both good personal characteristics and a socially acceptable image in order to help promote the product (White *et al.*, 2009). For example, Ms. Maria Sharapova (Russian tennis player) became Porsche's ambassador, and marketers identified an interesting link between her speed of acting and the speed of Porsche sports cars and put their precise and superior performance in a common professional class, and the reports indicate the profitability of this targeted decision (Ofri-Okyerere and Asamoah, 2015).

In summary it can be stated that the celebrity's characteristics must match that of the advertised product. Of course, there should be more caution here, because the more famous a person is, the more dangerous his or her fall can be and it can have huge consequences for the company (Thwaites *et al.*, 2012). On the other hand, because of the high sensitivity of this style of advertising, celebrities should also be very careful in choosing a commercial contract because if they work with a weak brand, their reputation may be seriously compromised. In fact, selecting the right person is a complex process that requires in-depth and practical study before implementation.

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